the SANDMAN™

SANDMAN
SPECIAL NO. 1
1991

SUGGESTED
FOR MATURE
READERS

ORPHEUS

by
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the SANDMAN™

THE SONG OF ORPHEUS

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The legend of Orpheus has been told in story, song and poem over countless generations. It has been told as a tale of bravery, as a lesson on the dangers of hubris, as a paeon to youth and love too quickly lost. It has never been told like this before. Here, then, is the story of the Sandman's only begotten son; Orpheus, the offspring of the Endless.

HE FLOATS ALONE UPON THE WINE-DARK SEA. HE LOOKS AROUND FOR HIS LOVE, BUT SHE IS NOT THERE. HE CALLS HER NAME, "EURYDICE. EURYDICE."

THERE IS NO REPLY. FOR REASONS HE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THIS DISTRESSES HIM MIGHTILY.

HE BEGINS TO CRY; SALT TEARS RUN DOWN HIS FACE, MINGLING WITH THE SALT OF THE WAVES.

IT COMES TO HIM THEN THAT HE MUST BE DREAMING, AND HE SMILES.

"FATHER?"

I HAVE HAD A STRANGE DREAM, FATHER. I WAS FLOATING ON THE SEA, CALLING MY WIFE'S NAME. WHAT DOES IT *MEAN*?

Am I a hedge wizard, that I should interpret your dreams for you?

Dreams are composed of many things, my son. Of images and hopes, of fears and memories. Memories of the past, and memories of the future...

YOU'RE SAYING I WAS DREAMING THE *FUTURE*? SOMETHING THAT HAS NOT YET HAPPENED?

Perhaps.

I'M YOUR *SON*. WHY WON'T YOU TELL ME WHAT YOU KNOW?

Because you are my son.

Orpheus. You should wake soon. It is, after all, your wedding day.

Now wake, boy. I will see you at your wedding.

"BUT FATHER..."

THE SONG OF ORPHEUS

C·H·A·P·T·E·R O·N·E

ORPHEUS? YOU WERE CRYING OUT IN YOUR SLEEP.

ORPHEUS?

I AM SORRY, ARISTAEUS.

NOT TO WORRY, LAD. REMINDS ME OF MY WEDDING DAY. I WAS TERRIFIED. HER NAME WAS AUTONOE. SHE WAS LOVELY.

YOU WERE MARRIED? I DIDN'T KNOW. WHAT HAPPENED TO HER?

SHE DIED. MANY YEARS AGO.

OH. I'M SORRY.

IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO. PEOPLE DIE. YOU GET OVER IT. IT'S PART OF LIFE.

YES, I SUPPOSE IT IS.

GET DRESSED. YOU'RE GETTING MARRIED. IT'S BEEN AGES SINCE I WENT TO A WEDDING. ROAST OX, EH?

NO. NO LIVING THING IS TO DIE AT MY WEDDING, ARISTAEUS. I DO NOT HOLD WITH SACRIFICE.

IT IS GOOD TO SACRIFICE, BEFORE YOU WED.

BUT YOU WILL HAVE WINE?

OF COURSE, MY FRIEND. AND DANCING.

THAT'S GOOD. IT WOULDN'T BE A PROPER WEDDING, WITHOUT WINE AND DANCING. BUT THERE OUGHT TO BE A SACRIFICE...

SHE'S A VERY BEAUTIFUL WOMAN.

YES.

YOU'RE VERY LUCKY.

I KNOW.

ORPHEUS. MY SON. I AM SO... *PROUD* OF YOU. THIS IS A *WONDERFUL* DAY.

I'M *SO* PLEASED.

MOTHER. THANK YOU. I'M SO HAPPY.

THIS IS MY NEW FRIEND, *ARISTAEUS*. HE'S A *FARMER*. ARISTAEUS, THIS IS MY MOTHER, CALLIOPE.

YOU'RE HIS *MOTHER*? YOU DON'T LOOK--

OLD ENOUGH? HOW *SWEET* OF YOU.

MOTHER? WILL FATHER BE HERE?

I would not miss my son's wedding, Orpheus.

HELLO, FATHER.

And the girl? Your wife-to-be? Where is she?

I AM HERE, ONEIROS. I WOULD NOT BE LATE ON THIS DAY. I AM PLEASED TO SEE YOU.

AND YOU TOO, MY DARLING.

EURYDICE. MY EURYDICE. OH MY LOVE.

THEY'RE SUCH A SWEET COUPLE. ISN'T SHE GORGEOUS?

AYE, SHE IS. SHE REMINDS ME OF MY WIFE, ON OUR WEDDING DAY.

WELL, HERE WE ALL ARE. ISN'T THIS NICE?

I LIKE WEDDINGS. ESPECIALLY FAMILY WEDDINGS. THAT MAKES IT SORT OF SPECIAL SOMEHOW, DOESN'T IT, BROTHER?

I was not certain you would come, my sister.

OH, IT'S NOT JUST ME...

IT'S ALL OF US.

DARLING-- LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO MY UNCLES AND AUNTS.

"MY AUNT TELEUTE."

I WISH YOU BOTH WELL.

"MY AUNT APONOIA."

I, TOO, WISH YOU BOTH WELL.

"MY AUNT MANIA."

YEAH. UHH. WELL... YOU KNOW... I NEARLY GOT MARRIED. BUT THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO. IT NEVER HAPPENED.

MAYBE THAT WAS MY FAULT. I DON'T KNOW. SHIT HAPPENS...

YOU'RE BOTH OKAY. GOOD LUCK.

"MY, UH... UNCLE-AUNT EPITHUMIA."

LOVE. ISN'T IT WONDERFUL?

I WISH YOU WELL.

"MY UNCLE OLETHROS."

SO YOU'RE MARRYING MY FAVORITE NEPHEW, EH, LASSIE? GO YOU BOTH WELL, CHILDREN.

"AND LAST, MY UNCLE POTMOS."

I GREET YOU, EURYDICE, ON THE DAY OF YOUR WEDDING.

UNCLE? WON'T YOU WISH US WELL?

I AM DESTINY. I AM POTMOS. I DO NOT WISH: I KNOW. WHAT MUST HAPPEN WILL HAPPEN. THAT IS THE WAY OF IT.

BUT THE PRIEST AWAITS YOU, CHILDREN. YOUR WEDDING BEGINS.

WE CALL UPON HYMENAEUS, LORD OF MARRIAGE, TO WATCH OVER THESE TWO PEOPLE IN THEIR LIVES, WHICH WILL HENCEFORTH BE LIVED AS ONE...

...HEART TO HEART AND BODY TO BODY, UNTIL THE SUNDERING OF DEATH.

YOU MAY EMBRACE HER, ORPHEUS.

HEY! MORE WINE... WHERE'S ANOTHER SKIN OF WINE?

OVER HERE, ARISTAEUS!

WELL? ARE YOU ENJOYING THE WEDDING, MY FRIEND?

ASSUREDLY. IT'S WONDERFUL. YOU AREN'T DANCING?

I AM CONTENT TO MAKE MUSIC, ARISTAEUS. BUT YOU DANCE. ENJOY YOURSELF. I WILL SEE NOTHING BUT HAPPY FACES ON MY WEDDING DAY.

MY *OTHER* UNCLES AND AUNTS, TELEUTE. I WISH *THEY* COULD ALSO HAVE STAYED FOR THE PARTY.

THEY HAD THINGS TO DO, ORPHEUS.

BUT *YOU* STAYED.

I *ALSO* HAVE THINGS TO DO, MY NEPHEW.

MY WIFE. MY LOVE. MY WIFE. IS SHE NOT *WONDERFUL*? LOOK AT HER *DANCING*. SHE'S SO *ALIVE*.

YES. SHE IS.

DOESN'T HE PLAY THE LYRE *WELL*, ARISTAEUS? MY HUSBAND IS *SO* CLEVER.

LATER, HE WILL *SING* TO US. HAVE YOU EVER HEARD HIM SING?

MY LADY EURYDICE...THERE'S SOMETHING I GOT TO TELL YOU. SOMETHING VERY *PRIVATE*. I GOTTA *PROBLEM*. CAN WE GO SOMEWHERE AND *TALK*?

WON'T TAKE LONG. HONEST.

OF *COURSE* WE CAN TALK, ARISTAEUS. I HATE TO THINK OF *ANYONE* BEING TROUBLED ON MY WEDDING DAY. I WILL DO WHAT I CAN TO HELP.

BUT WE CANNOT BE LONG.

A FEW MOMENTS, AND NO MORE, LADY. I'LL MEET YOU IN THE GROVE, AROUND THE BACK.

AN' THANK YOU. *THANK* YOU.

OH, COME ON, ONEIROS. JUST THIS ONCE. DANCE WITH ME.

I do not dance. Not even with you, my wife.

NOT EVEN ON YOUR SON'S WEDDING DAY?

As I said: I do not dance.

I'M SORRY IF I KEPT YOU WAITING, ARISTAEUS.

NOW, TELL ME, WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM? HOW CAN I HELP?

THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT, AND I CAN'T HAVE IT, AND I'M GOING TO TAKE IT ANYWAY. THAT'S MY PROBLEM.

I THINK YOU'VE DRUNK A LITTLE MORE THAN IS GOOD FOR YOU, ARISTAEUS. WHAT DO YOU NEED FROM ME?

YOU.

I WANT YOU.

YOU'RE JOKING, RIGHT? YOU'RE DRUNK.

PLEASE-- LET GO OF MY ARM.

ARISTAEUS-- YOU'RE HURTING ME.

PLEASE!

I WANT YOU. IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I HAD A WOMAN. I WANT YOU...

AEI.

PLEASE! COME BACK!

I WASN'T GOING TO HURT YOU!

TRULY!

I'M DRUNK. I DIDN'T-- I DIDN'T MEAN--

PLEASE--

HH.

YOU WON'T TELL ANYONE...

WILL YOU?

...AND WE'RE THE SAME AGE. TO THE DAY. ISN'T THAT A WONDERFUL COINCIDENCE? IT SHOWS THAT WE WERE MEANT FOR EACH OTHER. TWO HEARTS BEATING AS ONE...

ORPHEUS?

YES, AUNT TELEUTE?

...NOTHING.

ORPHEUS!

THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG.

EURYDICE?

I AM SORRY, MY FRIEND. I MEANT NOTHING BY IT. I MEANT NO HARM.

"HAS SOMETHING HAPPENED, ARISTAEUS?

"HAS SOMETHING HAPPENED TO EURYDICE?"

THE SONG OF ORPHEUS

C·H·A·P·T·E·R T·W·O

THE SMOKE FROM HER PYRE DRIFTS SKYWARD IN THE WINDLESS SUMMER AIR.

HE FINDS IT EASY TO IGNORE.

SOME THINGS ARE TOO BIG TO BE SEEN; SOME EMOTIONS TOO HUGE TO BE FELT.

HE CONCENTRATES INSTEAD ON THE CORRECT FINGERING OF THE *SONG OF THE GATE*, ON PLAYING EACH NOTE EXACTLY, FINELY.

THE TUNE WEAVES ITSELF AROUND HIM, INTRICATE AND STRANGE, LIKE A SONG FROM A DREAM.

IT OCCURS TO HIM THAT HE HAS NEVER PLAYED IT SO WELL; AND HE TAKES A DISTANT PRIDE IN THIS.

AND WHEN HE IS READY, WHEN THE MUSIC IS A PART OF HIM, HE BEGINS TO SING, CONSTRUCTING THE GATE WITH HIS VOICE AND THE NOTES OF HIS LYRE.

WHO IS IT?

IT'S THE BOY-CHILD.

YOU ASK HIM WHAT HE WANTS.

ASK HIM WHAT HE WANTS.

I HAVE COME TO SEE MY FATHER.

ENTER, THEN, BOY. YOUR FATHER IS HERE.

ORPHEUS. WE HAVE HEARD OF YOUR LOSS; YOU HAVE *OUR* SYMPATHIES ALSO.

I DO NOT NEED YOUR PITY, HIPPOGRIFF.

IT WAS FREELY GIVEN, BOY. YOU SHOULD NOT SCORN IT.

DON'T PITY ME.

SHE IS ALIVE IN THE *UNDERWORLD.*

So?

SO. WILL YOU HELP ME TO GAIN HER BACK FROM THE UNDERWORLD, FATHER? WILL YOU GO TO HADES AND KORE, AND PLEAD MY CASE?

You are talking foolishness, my son. I will hear no more of it.

BUT *FATHER--*

No more.

VERY WELL, THEN. *NO MORE.*

I AM NO LONGER YOUR SON.

Orpheus! Come back here. Now.

NO.

SUICIDE, EH, LADDIE?

D'YOU *REALLY* THINK THAT'S YOUR WISEST COURSE?

YES. I DO.

WE CANNOT BE *TOGETHER* ALIVE.

WE *CAN* BE TOGETHER IN THE UNDERWORLD. *COLD* AND *PALE* AND *IMMOBILE*, BUT *TOGETHER*.

TOGETHER WE WILL WHISPER IN THE *SHALLOW* VOICES OF THE *DEAD; TOGETHER* WE WILL WAIT IN THE *DARKNESS*.

AND, IN THE END--BUT *TOGETHER*-- WE WILL DRINK THE WATERS OF LETHE, THAT BRING FORGETFULNESS.

THAT'S THE STUPIDEST THING I'VE HEARD IN CENTURIES.

HAAHAAHAAHAAH!

OHH, ORPHEUS, YOU'RE A *STRANGE* CHILD. I THINK YOU ARE *MORE* IN *LOVE* WITH THE *IDEA* OF YOUR DEAD LOVE THAN YOU *EVER* WERE WITH THE *GIRL HERSELF*...

TAKE THAT BACK. YOU *WILL* TAKE THAT BACK, OR I'LL...

CALM DOWN.

OR I'LL *THROW* YOU UP IN THE AIR AND *CATCH* YOU, AS I DID WHEN YOU WERE A MITE SMALLER...

OLETHROS! YOU WOULDN'T DARE...

HAAH HAAH HAAH! TRY ME, LAD. JUST *TRY* ME.

NOW-- YOU'VE SPOKEN TO YOUR FATHER, I TAKE IT.

YES. *HE* WAS NO HELP.

HE'S A *DARK ONE*, YOUR FATHER. HE *DOES* CARE FOR YOU, THOUGH...

HE HAS A *STRANGE* WAY OF *SHOWING* IT.

AYE. BUT *THAT'S* HIS *WAY*. HE'S SET IN HIS WAYS.

OLETHROS -- WHAT CAN I DO? SHE'S GONE. SHE'S DEAD. I DO NOT WANT TO LIVE WITHOUT HER.

HMM.

WELL, YOU'RE A ROMANTIC FOOL, BUT THAT'S NO SURPRISE: YOU GET THAT FROM YOUR FATHER.

HMM. WELL, YOU HAVE A FEW ALTERNATIVES. FOR EXAMPLE: YOU COULD DIE. YOU'D SEE HER THEN. OF COURSE, YOU WON'T GET MUCH CHANCE TO TALK, BUT YOU'LL SEE HER.

YOU COULD BE BORN... BUT YOU PEOPLE NEVER REMEMBER THAT PARTICULAR CONVERSATION WITH HER. I DON'T KNOW WHY NOT. YOU JUST DON'T.

OR YOU COULD GO TO HER HOUSE.

DEATH IS HARDLY MY PROVINCE. HAVE YOU TALKED TO YOUR AUNT ABOUT THIS?

TELEUTE?

AYE.

WHAT CAN SHE DO FOR ME?

SHE CAN DO WHATEVER SHE WANTS TO, BOY. THERE WILL BE CONDITIONS, BUT THEN, THERE ALWAYS ARE.

I... DON'T KNOW HOW TO SEE HER. I MEAN, SHE JUST TURNS UP WHEN SHE WANTS TO. WHERE DO I FIND HER? WHAT DO I DO?

SHE HAS A HOUSE?

SHE HAS LOTS OF THINGS, ALTHOUGH SHE SELDOM HAS MUCH USE FOR THEM. YOU SHOULD SEE HER FLOPPY HAT COLLECTION.

BUT YES... SHE HAS A HOUSE.

WILL SHE BE THERE?

SHE IS EVERYWHERE. SHE WILL BE THERE.

HOW DO I GET TO HER?

YOU ASK YOUR UNCLE OLETHROS TO SEND YOU THERE. AND YOU ASK ME VERY NICELY. HAHAAH! HAAH!

WILL YOU? PLEASE?

AYE.

BWOOM!

THROUGH THERE.

WILL SHE SEE ME?

OH, AYE. SHE'LL SEE YOU.

SOONER OR LATER, SHE SEES EVERY-ONE.

HMMMPH. IF I'D *KNOWN* I WAS GOING TO HAVE COMPANY, I WOULD'VE TIDIED THE PLACE UP.

HI, ORPHEUS. LOOKING FOR SOMETHING?

YES.

YOU.

I THINK.

WELL, LIKE I SAID, THE PLACE ISN'T REALLY IN ANY STATE FOR VISITORS. BUT YOU'RE *HERE* NOW. MAKE YOURSELF *COMFORTABLE*.

UM. ARE YOU *OKAY*?

I DO NOT KNOW. I DO NOT *THINK* SO. THIS PLACE IS SO *STRANGE* TO MY *EYES*.

YEAH? WELL, THIS IS HOW I *LIKE* IT. BUT IF IT MAKES THINGS EASIER I CAN *GLITZ* IT ALL UP A BIT. GET IT CLOSER TO THE KIND OF THING YOU'D *EXPECT* TO SEE.

HOLD ON A SEC.

THERE. IS *THAT* ANY BETTER?

PERHAPS... I DO NOT KNOW...

SO YOU MADE IT *HERE*. I'M *IMPRESSED*. WHAT DO YOU *WANT*?

A WEDDING GIFT. TO REPLACE THE ONE YOU TOOK FROM ME.

IT WAS HER TIME TO GO, ORPHEUS. PEOPLE DIE. IT'S OKAY. IT HAPPENS.

GO ON WITH YOUR OWN LIFE. YOU HAVE MANY THINGS TO DO: MANY SONGS TO PLAY AND TO SING.

NOT WITHOUT *HER*.

GIVE HER *BACK* TO ME, TELEUTE.

I WISH I *COULD*, ORPHEUS. SHE'S NOT MINE ANY MORE. SHE'S IN THE *UNDERWORLD*. THAT'S WHERE *YOU* PEOPLE GO. SHE'S IN *HADES'* REALM.

THEN I WILL GO THERE. AND I WILL BRING HER BACK.

THAT ISN'T GOING TO HAPPEN. YOU DON'T GO TO THE UNDERWORLD WITHOUT DYING FIRST.

BUT HEROES AND GODS VISIT THE UNDERWORLD. HERAKLES CHAINED CERBERUS...

LISTEN, IDIOT. YOU CAN'T GO TO THE UNDERWORLD AND COME BACK ALIVE. NOT IF YOU'RE MORTAL.

AND HERAKLES WAS FULL OF IT. HE JUST GOT DEAD DRUNK FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS IN PHRYGIA AND TOLD EVERYONE HE'D BEEN TO THE LAND OF THE DEAD.

UNCLE OLETHROS SAID YOU COULD DO IT. HE SAID YOU COULD DO ANYTHING. HE SAID THERE WERE RULES, BUT THAT YOU COULD DO IT.

YOUR UNCLE OLETHROS HAS A BIG MOUTH. YOU KNOW THAT?

YOU CAN DO IT, THEN?

HM. DID ANYONE EVER TELL YOU YOU'RE A LOT LIKE YOUR FATHER IN SOME WAYS?

YEAH. YEAH, YOU COULD GO TO THE UNDERWORLD. YOU COULD EVEN COME BACK. ALL THAT HAS TO HAPPEN IS THAT I AGREE NEVER TO TAKE YOU.

BUT THERE'S A CATCH. RULES.

I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE RULES. THERE ARE ALWAYS RULES. ALL I CARE ABOUT IS EURYDICE.

LOOK ME IN THE EYES, ORPHEUS.

OKAY.

IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT. YOU GOT IT.

I... I THANK YOU, TELEUTE.

YEAH. I HOPE IT WORKS OUT FOR YOU.

BUT DON'T YOU KNOW? I THOUGHT YOU COULD FORETELL THE FUTURE...?

I DON'T NEED TO KNOW THE FUTURE. WHEN THE FUTURE'S OVER, THEN IT'S ME...

OKAY. SHOW'S OVER. GET OUT OF HERE.

GO HOME.

BUT...

GO TO TAENARUM, IN THE SOUTH OF HELLAS. THERE IS A GATE THERE THAT WILL TAKE YOU TO THE UNDERWORLD.

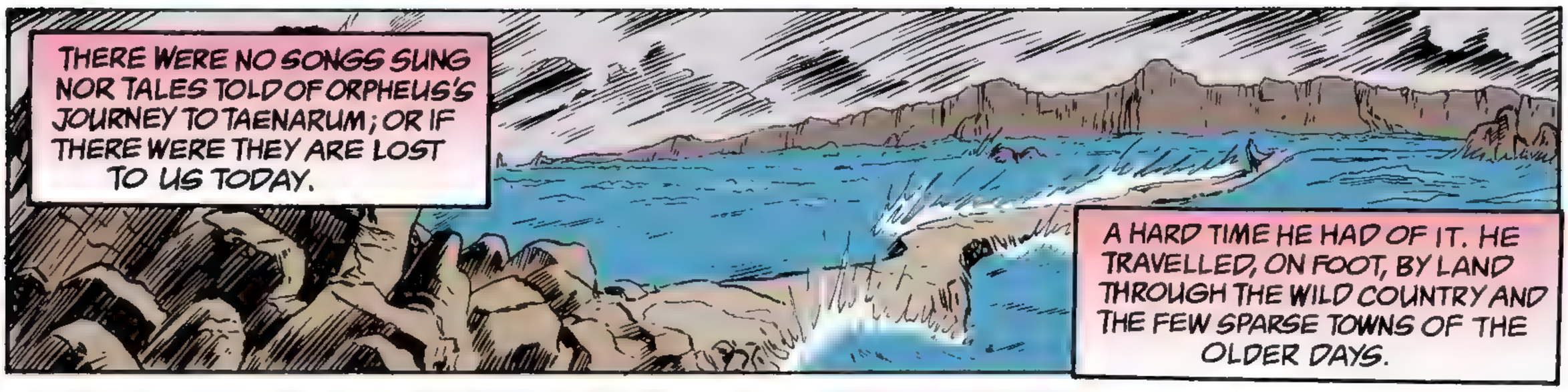
BUT...

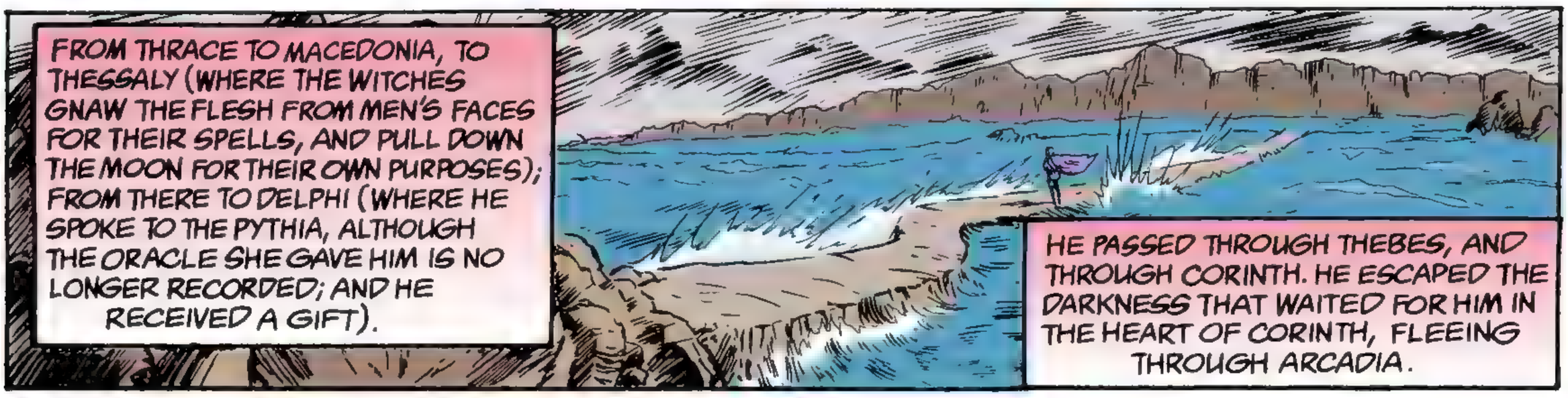
"GO HOME, ORPHEUS."

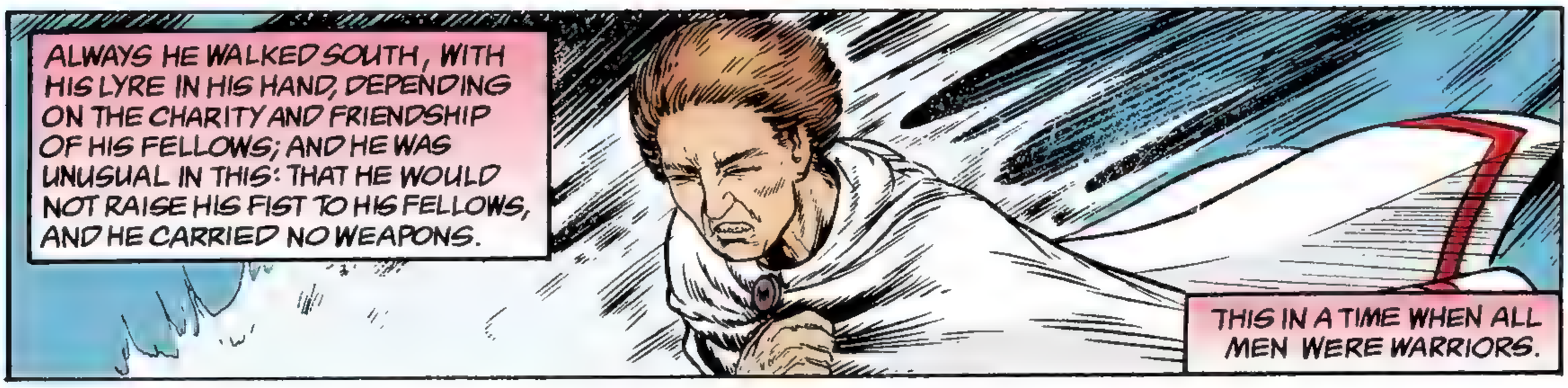
"GO HOME."

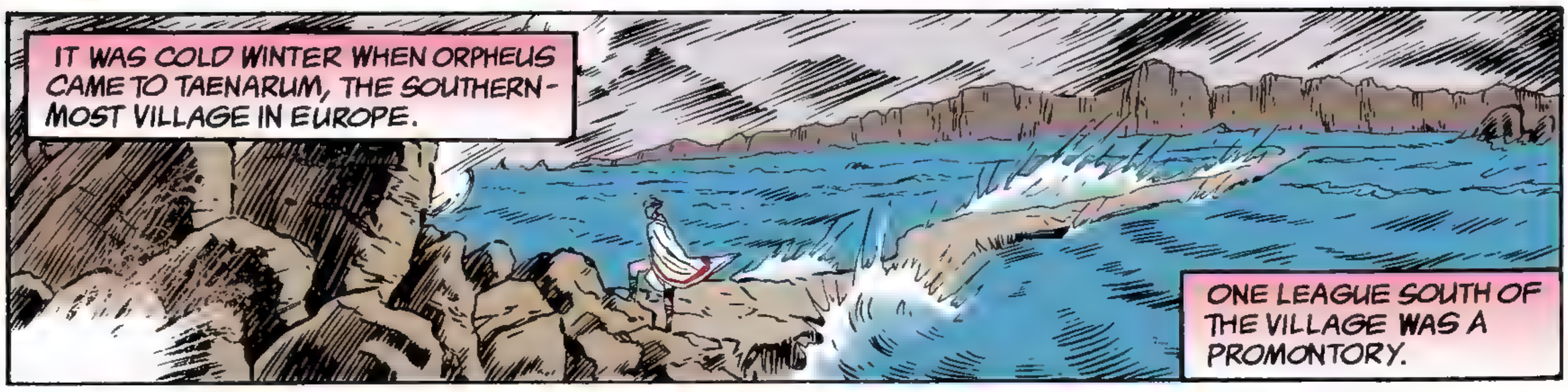
THE SONG OF ORPHEUS

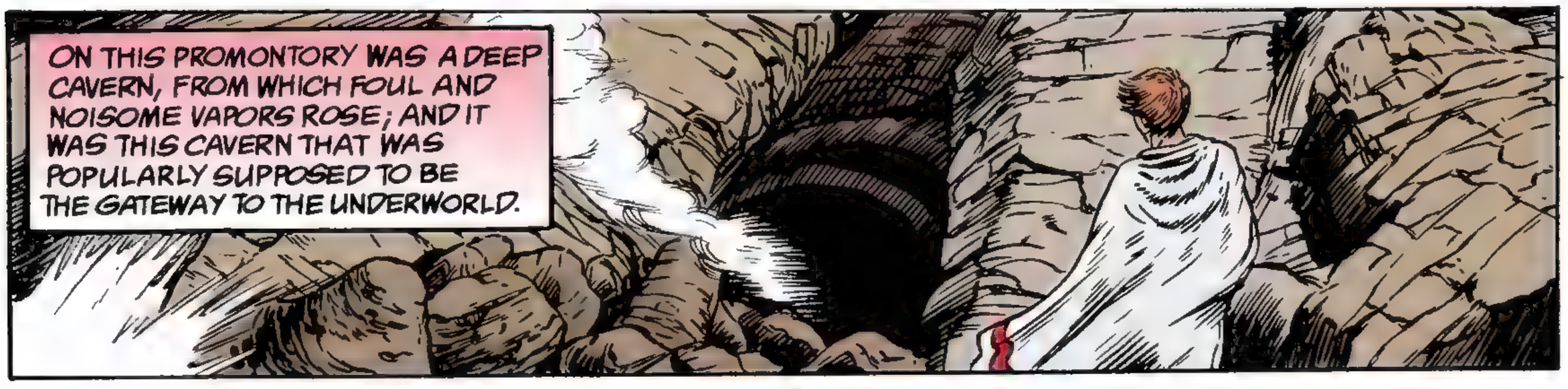
C·H·A·P·T·E·R T·H·R·E·E

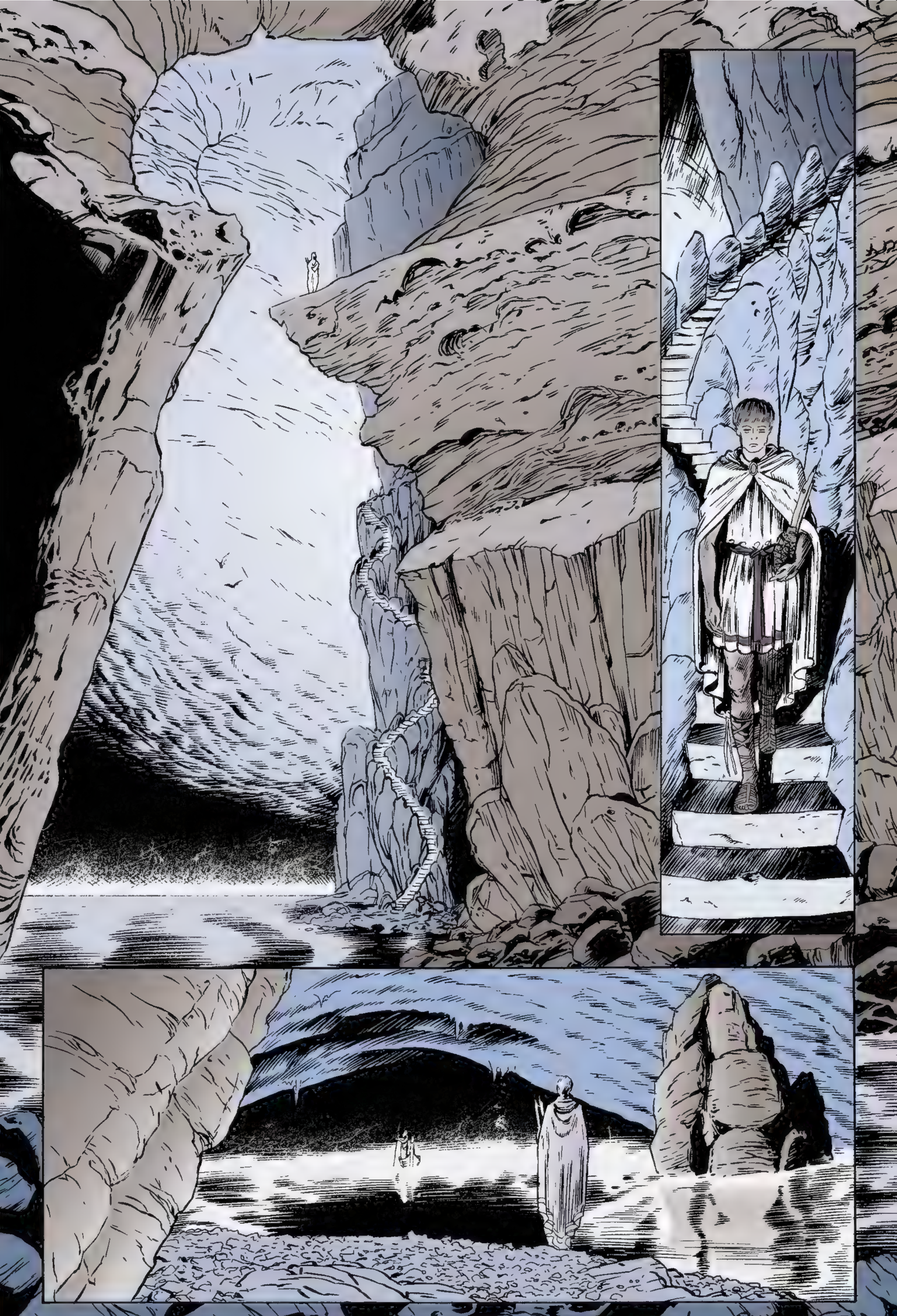

THERE WERE NO SONGS SUNG NOR TALES TOLD OF ORPHEUS'S JOURNEY TO TAENARUM; OR IF THERE WERE THEY ARE LOST TO US TODAY.
A HARD TIME HE HAD OF IT. HE TRAVELLED, ON FOOT, BY LAND THROUGH THE WILD COUNTRY AND THE FEW SPARSE TOWNS OF THE OLDER DAYS.


FROM THRACE TO MACEDONIA, TO THESSALY (WHERE THE WITCHES GNAW THE FLESH FROM MEN'S FACES FOR THEIR SPELLS, AND PULL DOWN THE MOON FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES); FROM THERE TO DELPHI (WHERE HE SPOKE TO THE PYTHIA, ALTHOUGH THE ORACLE SHE GAVE HIM IS NO LONGER RECORDED; AND HE RECEIVED A GIFT).
HE PASSED THROUGH THEBES, AND THROUGH CORINTH. HE ESCAPED THE DARKNESS THAT WAITED FOR HIM IN THE HEART OF CORINTH, FLEEING THROUGH ARCADIA.


ALWAYS HE WALKED SOUTH, WITH HIS LYRE IN HIS HAND, DEPENDING ON THE CHARITY AND FRIENDSHIP OF HIS FELLOWS; AND HE WAS UNUSUAL IN THIS: THAT HE WOULD NOT RAISE HIS FIST TO HIS FELLOWS, AND HE CARRIED NO WEAPONS.
THIS IN A TIME WHEN ALL MEN WERE WARRIORS.


IT WAS COLD WINTER WHEN ORPHEUS CAME TO TAENARUM, THE SOUTHERN-MOST VILLAGE IN EUROPE.
ONE LEAGUE SOUTH OF THE VILLAGE WAS A PROMONTORY.


ON THIS PROMONTORY WAS A DEEP CAVERN, FROM WHICH FOUL AND NOISOME VAPORS ROSE; AND IT WAS THIS CAVERN THAT WAS POPULARLY SUPPOSED TO BE THE GATEWAY TO THE UNDERWORLD.



YOU ARE NOT DEAD.

I HAVE COME TO SPEAK TO YOUR LORD AND LADY. WILL YOU TAKE ME TO THEM?

OH SO? WHAT HAVE YOU BROUGHT FOR ME?

A SPRIG OF *MISTLETOE*; A GIFT FROM THE ORACLE AT DELPHI.

THE BOUGH OF GOLD. AYE, *THAT* IS THE PAYMENT FOR THE LIVING, THOUGH IT'S RARELY I'VE SEEN IT. FROM THE *DEAD* I WOULD TAKE A *PENNY*, TO FERRY THEM ACROSS THE *STYX*.

VERY WELL. ENTER.

IS THAT YOURS?

YES.

WILL YOU PLAY IT FOR ME? IT HAS BEEN LONG SINCE I HEARD MUSIC...

AS YOU WILL.

FERRYMAN? IS SOMETHING WRONG?

HAVE I OFFENDED YOU?

DON'T STOP.

HOW WILL I CROSS THE RIVER WHEN I RETURN?

IF YOU RETURN, THEN YOU WILL LEAVE BY ANOTHER PATH.

MORTAL MAN?

YES?

BEWARE OF THE DOG.

KING HADES. QUEEN PERSEPHONE. I GREET YOU.

WELL, WELL, WELL. ORPHEUS. THE BALLADEER.

HAST THOU A SONG FOR US, THEN, LITTLE MORTAL MAN?

YES. YES, I DO.

I SING OF ONLY TWO THINGS: LOVE AND TIME. I JOURNEYED TO THIS WORLD BELOW, TO WHICH ALL BORN AS MORTALS MUST DESCEND IN TIME.

I CAME TO PLEAD WITH YOU, GREAT KING, GREAT QUEEN. I SING AN HONEST SONG, AND I WILL TELL THE TRUTH, UNVARNISHED, AND IN MY OWN WAY.

I CAME BECAUSE MY WIFE WAS KILLED BEFORE HER DAYS IN LANDS ABOVE WERE DUE TO END.

EURYDICE DISTURBED A SERPENT AND IT POURED ITS POISON DEEP INTO HER PRECIOUS VEINS.

I WAS NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO BEAR MY GRIEF. LOVE WAS TOO STRONG FOR ME, AND DRAGGED ME DOWN. THE POWER OF LOVE IS STRONG IN LANDS ABOVE.

"AND LOVE IS KNOWN HERE TOO, IF ALL THE TALES OF PASSION, AYE, AND RAPE SO LONG AGO HAVE ANY TRUTH OR HONESTY TO THEM.

"THEY SAY YOU TWO WERE BOUND AS ONE BY LOVE.

"I BEG YOU, BY THESE SILENT REALMS, TO WEAVE AGAIN THE DESTINY OF ONE WHO DIED TOO SOON.

"FOR WE THE LIVING WILL BE YOURS ONE DAY AND ALL WE HOPE AND FEEL AND TOUCH AND DREAM, ALL WE HOLD DEAR, WILL WITHER AND BE GONE.

"FOR AT THE END, WITH PENNIES ON OUR EYES, WE DIE, AND ROT. AND THEN, AS HOLLOW GHOSTS WE'LL DWELL BELOW: OUR LAST, OUR FINAL HOME.

Ixion's Wheel stands still with wonder.

The vultures cease to gnaw Tityus's liver.

Tantalus makes no effort to satisfy his hunger or thirst.

"OH KING, OH QUEEN. MY WIFE, LIKE ALL THE REST WILL SOON BE YOURS. I ASK YOU FOR A GIFT, A TINY BOON. I ASK YOU FOR HER LIFE, AND ONLY FOR A SHORT SPAN ON THIS EARTH.

BUT IF YOU CANNOT GRANT THAT, THEN I WISH NOT TO RETURN TO LANDS THAT SEE THE SUN.

AND YOU MAY HAVE MY LIFE AS WELL AS HERS.

THOU HAST MADE THE FURIES WEEP, ORPHEUS. THIS IS UNHEARD OF.

A NICE OFFER, BUT POINTLESS. THOU DOST NOT BELONG HERE, MORTAL.

THOU ART DISRUPTING MY PERFECTLY-ORDERED WORLD, ORPHEUS.

SO BE IT. BUT THERE ARE CONDITIONS. THERE ARE RULES.

THERE ARE ALWAYS RULES.

GIVE ME MY BRIDE AND I WILL LEAVE THIS PLACE.

THOU HAST MADE THE FURIES CRY, ORPHEUS. THEY WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOU FOR THAT.

NONE LEAVE THE UNDERWORLD BY THE WAY THEY CAME TO IT. THERE IS A PATH THAT LEADS UPWARDS. FOLLOW THAT PATH AND DO NOT DEVIATE FROM IT.

NOW LEAVE.

GO THOU BACK TO THE WORLD ABOVE, AND EURYDICE SHALL FOLLOW THEE AS THY SHADOW.

BUT HALT NOT, SPEAK NOT, TURN NOT TO LOOK BEHIND THEE, TILL YE BOTH HAVE LEFT OUR KINGDOM AND GAINED THE UPPER AIR OF YOUR NATIVE THRACE.

AND THEN, AND ONLY THEN, SHALL SHE BE THINE.

DO NOT LOOK BACK.

BUT THRACE IS MANY HUNDREDS OF LEAGUES AWAY...

NO. ALL LANDS LIE ABOVE THE UNDERWORLD.

NOW GO, LITTLE MAN.

I THANK YOU, LORD HADES, LADY PERSEPHONE.

HE LEFT THAT PLACE. AND THE DARK LAUGHTER OF HADES FOLLOWED HIM FOR MANY LEAGUES.

AFTER SOME HOURS THE LAST ECHOES OF THE LAUGHTER DIED AWAY, AND ORPHEUS WALKED IN SILENCE.

HE COULD HEAR HIS HEART BEATING. HE COULD HEAR HIS SANDALED FEET PADDING ON THE COLD STONE.

HE HEARD THE BLOOD IN HIS EARS, RUSHING LIKE A DARK TORRENT.

HE HEARD NOTHING.

IN OBEDIENCE TO HADES' COMMAND, HE KEPT HIS EYES FIXED ON THE GLOOM AHEAD OF HIM.

AS THE HOURS PASSED, THE CONVICTION GREW THAT HE WAS ALONE. THAT THERE WAS NO ONE BEHIND HIM.

HE REMEMBERED HADES' LAUGH AS HE WALKED, IN THE SILENCE.

AND IN THE END, DAYLIGHT.

COLD, DISTANT DAYLIGHT AHEAD OF HIM.

ALONE.

HE *KNEW* HE WAS ALONE.

HE WAS THE BUTT OF HADES' JOKE. AND HE--

AND HE --

HE LOOKED BACK.

ORPHEUS?

MY LOVE?

"EURYDICE?"

NO.

NO!

THE SONG OF ORPHEUS

C·H·A·P·T·E·R F·O·U·R

ORPHEUS?

YOU SCARED THEM. YOU SCARED MY FRIENDS.

ORPHEUS? IT'S ME.

I KNOW IT'S YOU, MOTHER. YOU SCARED MY FRIENDS.

I--I'M SORRY.

HOW ARE YOU?
FINE. AND YOU?
FINE.
WELL, NO. NO I'M NOT FINE. YOUR FATHER AND I ... HAVE YOU SEEN HIM, RECENTLY?
I HAVE NOT SEEN HIM.
OH. HE AND I ... WELL ... IT'S BEEN DIFFICULT. WE HAD AN ARGUMENT. AFTER YOU ... AFTER YOU WENT TO THE UNDERWORLD.
HE TOLD ME OF THE TALK THAT YOU TWO HAD, BEFORE HE LEFT.
HE SHOULD HAVE TALKED TO THE GODS OF THE UNDERWORLD FOR YOU. THEY RESPECT HIM. THEY ... SOMETIMES I THINK THEY EVEN FEAR HIM.
BUT NO.
I WALKED OUT ON HIM.
I HAVE TOLD HIM I WILL SEE HIM NO LONGER.
I ... THINK I HAVE HURT HIS PRIDE.
SO NEITHER OF US IS SPEAKING TO HIM.
HE IS NOT ONE TO FORGET A SLIGHT. NOR TO FORGIVE.
DO YOU STILL LOVE HIM?
I DO NOT KNOW.
I DO NOT THINK SO.
IS THAT MY FAULT?
IT'S BEEN COMING FOR A LONG TIME. HE CANNOT SHARE ANYTHING; ANY PART OF HIMSELF.
I THOUGHT I COULD CHANGE HIM.
BUT HE DOES NOT CHANGE. HE WILL NOT. PERHAPS HE CAN NOT.
I DO NOT WISH TO TALK OF HIM. OR TO TALK TO YOU, MY MOTHER.

YOU SHOULD *LEAVE* THE WILDERNESS, ORPHEUS. IT WOULD DO YOU GOOD TO BE AMONG PEOPLE.

PEOPLE *HURT* YOU. PEOPLE *LEAVE.* I STAY HERE.

MOTHER? WHEN I RETURNED FROM THE OTHER PLACE, DO YOU KNOW WHAT I DID?

NO.

I TRIED TO KILL MYSELF.

I SHOULD HAVE LISTENED TO TELEUTE. SHE TOLD ME. ONLY TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE GO TO HELL. THOSE WHO ARE DEAD ALREADY...

AND THOSE LIKE ME.

ORPHEUS-- I CAME FOR A *REASON.*

SO?

I CAME TO *WARN* YOU: THE *BACCHANTE* ARE COMING. YOU MUST LEAVE THIS PLACE. GO SOMEWHERE *ELSE.*

I DO NOT *CARE* ABOUT THE BACCHANTE.

THEY ARE *DANGEROUS,* MY SON. *THE SISTERS OF THE FRENZY.* AND THEY ARE COMING *HERE.*

I DO NOT CARE ABOUT THE BACCHANTE.

GOODBYE, ORPHEUS.

GOODBYE, MOTHER.

EUAN! EUAN! EU-OI-OI-OI!

EUAN! EUAN! EU-OI-OI-OI!

EUAN! EUAN! EU-OI-OI-OI!

EUAN! EUAN! EU-OI-OI-OI!

EUAN! EUAN! EU-OI-OI-OI!

EUAN! EUAN! EU-OI-OI-OI!

EUAN! EUAN! EU-OI-OI-OI!

EUAN! EUAN! EU-OI-OI-OI!

WE ARE THE BACCHEAE. JOIN US IN OUR WORSHIP.

DRINK WINE WITH US.

MAKE LOVE WITH US.

EAT RAW FLESH WITH US.

REJOICE WITH US.

I...WOMEN...LADIES... I AM SORRY. I WILL NOT--CANNOT--TAKE PART IN YOUR RITUALS.

I WILL NOT MAKE LOVE WITH YOU.

THERE IS ONLY ONE WOMAN I HAVE LOVED. TO WHOM I COULD HAVE GIVEN MY LOVE, AND SHE IS GONE.

LEAVE IN PEACE. PLEASE.

WE ARE THE BELOVED OF DIONYSUS, MAN. YOU DO NOT GIVE. WE TAKE.

NO...

UT.

¡NO!

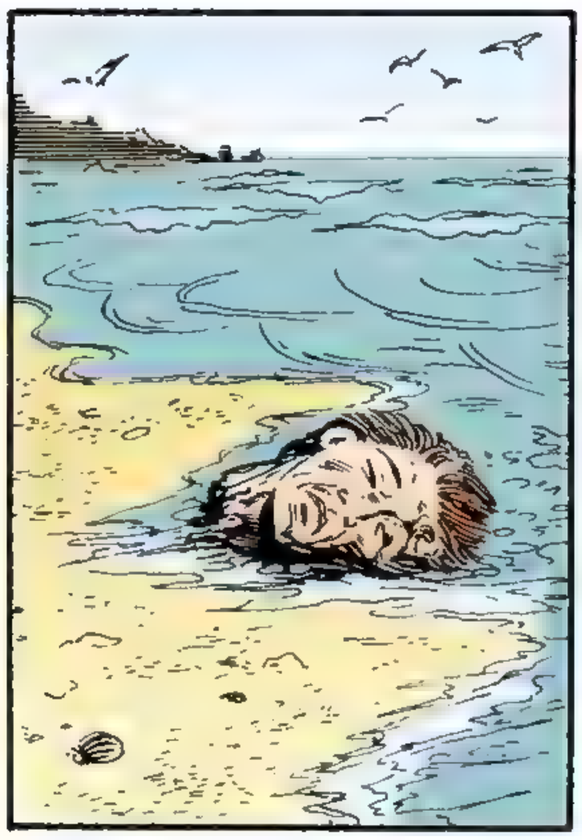
EWAN! EWAN! EU-OI-OI-OI!

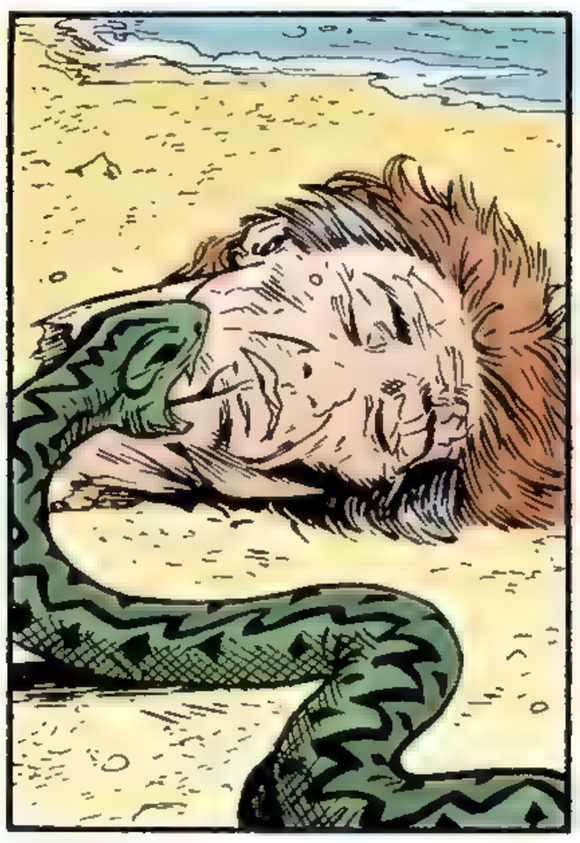
EURYDICE!

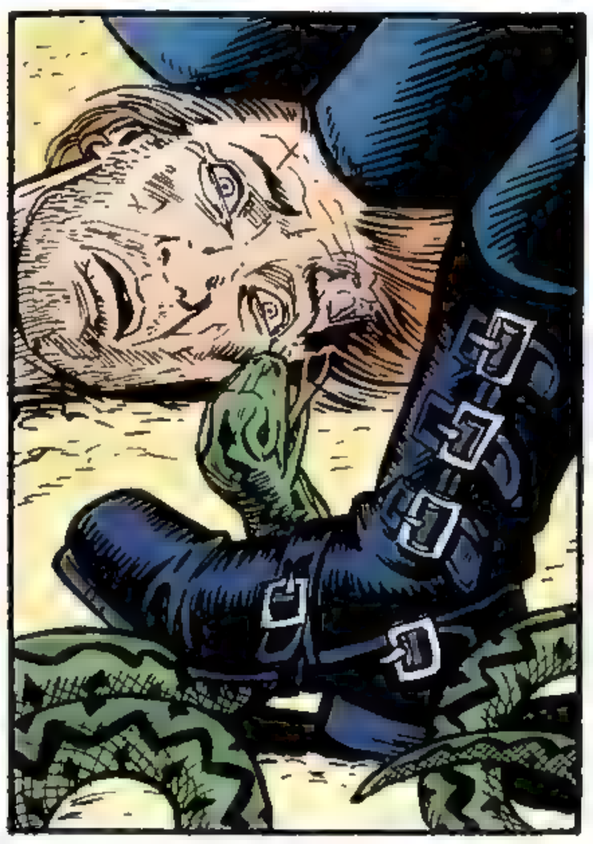
EURYDICE...

THE SONG OF ORPHEUS

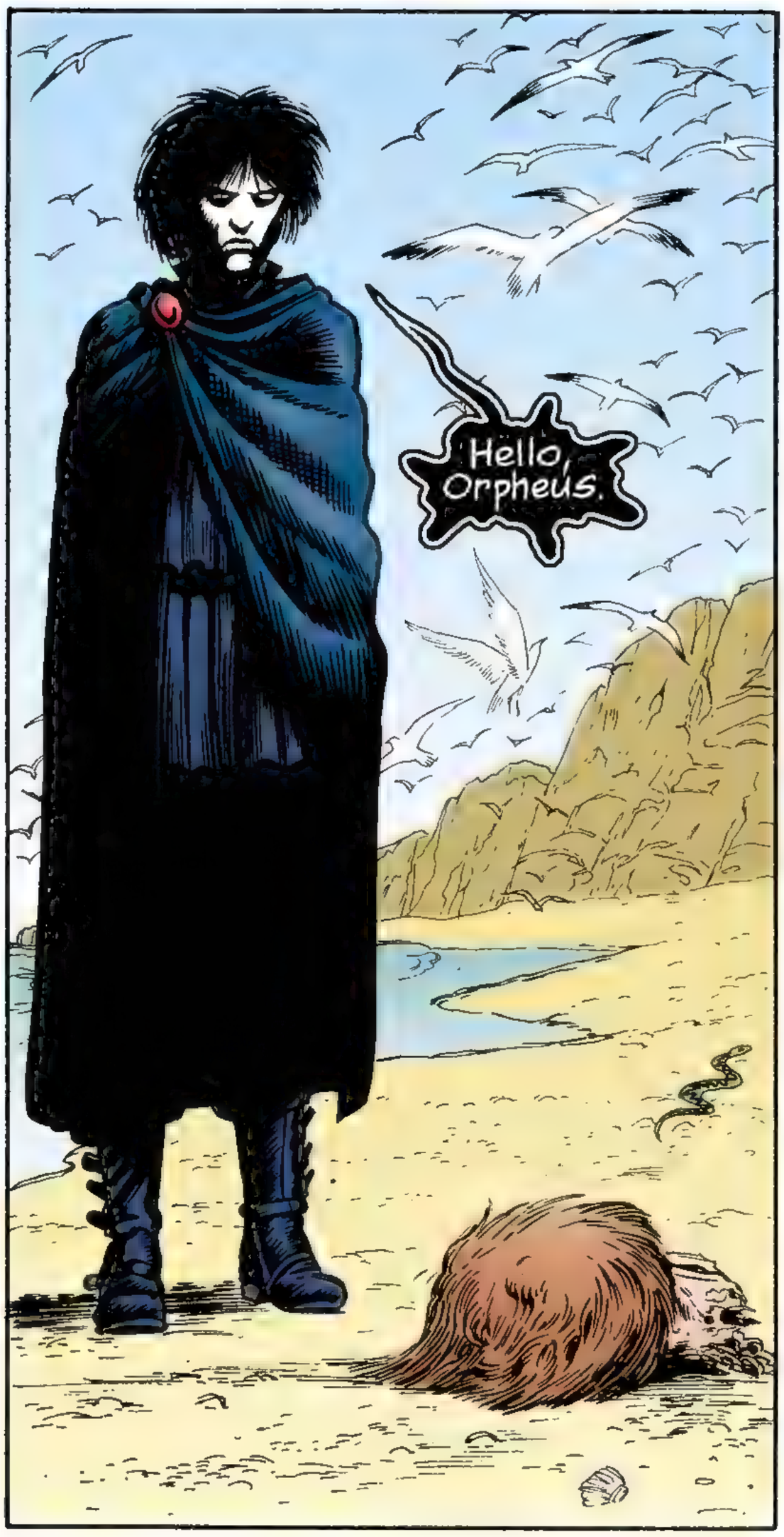
EPILOGUE

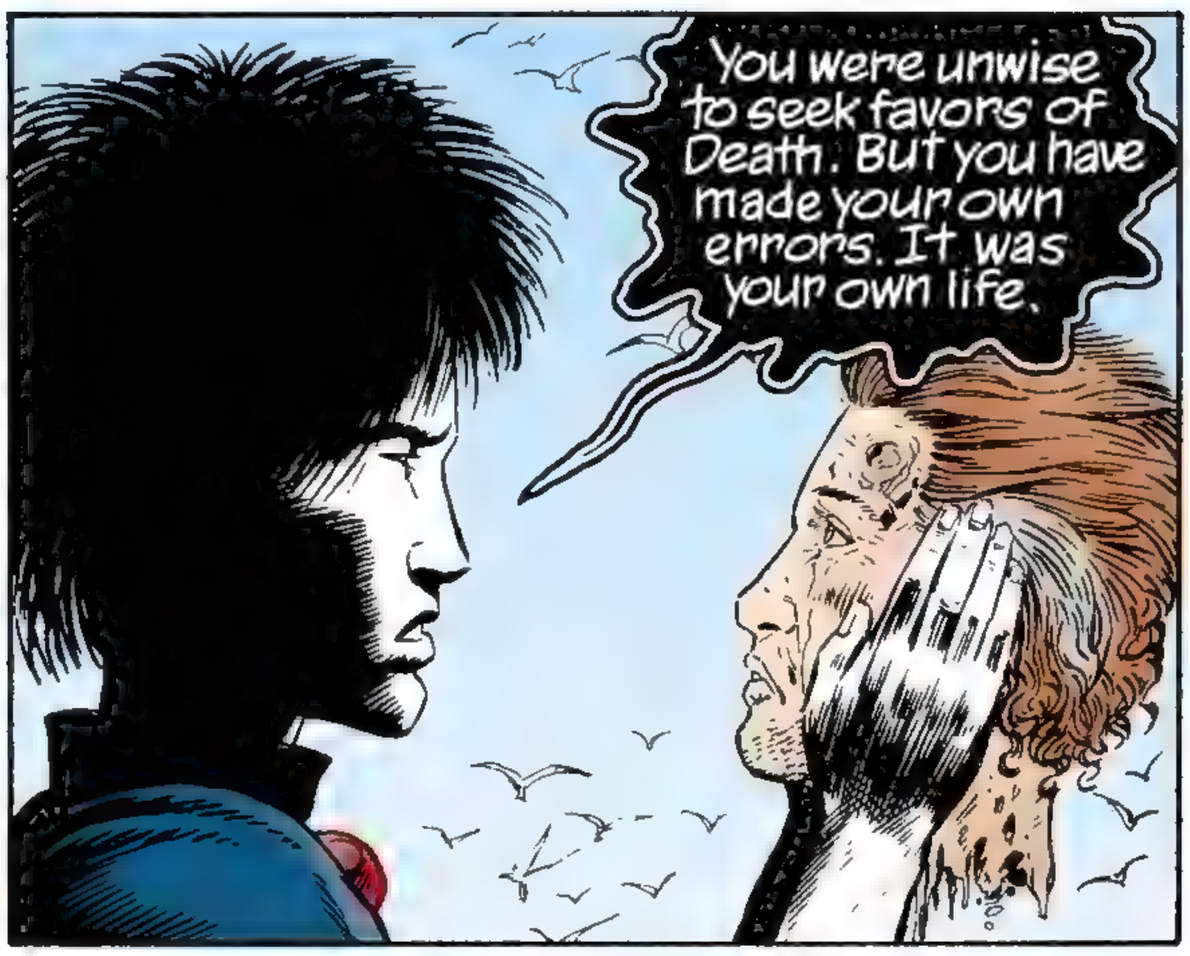






"FATHER?"





I have visited certain priests on this island, in their dreams. They will find you, soon, and care for you.

I will not see you again.

BUT FATHER...

"Father"?

Did you not say you were no longer my son?

PLEASE. FATHER. HELP ME. HELP ME TO DIE.

Your life is your own, Orpheus. Your death, likewise. Always, and forever, your own. Fare well.

We shall not meet again.

FATHER! COME BACK! PLEASE...

FATHER...

ORPHEUS WATCHED AS HIS FATHER WALKED AWAY; UNABLE TO TURN HIS HEAD, EVEN HAD HE WANTED TO.

ORPHEUS WATCHED THROUGH TEAR-STUNG EYES UNTIL HE WAS OUT OF SIGHT.

HIS FATHER NEVER EVEN TRIED TO LOOK BACK.

HIS FATHER WALKED AWAY SLOWLY, PACE BY PACE, THROUGH THE SAND AND FOAM.

A GALLERY

DESTINY — *Tom Canty*

Destiny is the oldest of the Endless; in the Beginning was the Word, and it was traced by hand on the first page of his book, before it ever was spoken aloud.

DEATH — *Dave McKean*

"I'm **not** *blessed,* **or** *merciful. I'm just* **me.** *I've got a* **job** *to do, and I* **do** *it."*

DREAM — *Barry Windsor-Smith*

Dream accumulates names to himself like others make friends; but he permits himself few friends.

DESIRE — *Craig Russell*

Desire is everything you have ever wanted. Whoever you are. Whatever you are. Everything.

DESPAIR — *Duncan Fegredo*

Despair says little and is patient.

DELIRIUM — *Simon Bisley*

Delirium was once Delight. And although that was long ago now, even today her eyes are badly matched.

MATTHEW AND EVE — *Kent Williams*

Matthew died in dreams as a man, and lives in dreams as a raven. Eve, if she ever lived or died, did it in the dawn times; now she is his lover, his mother, his wife — as she is for all men.

CAIN AND ABEL — *Sergio Aragonés*

And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel, thy brother? And he said, I know not; am I my brother's keeper?

Genesis, Chapter 4, Verse 9

FROM DREAMS I CONJURE A HANDFUL OF YELLOW GRAIN.
I THROW THE GRAIN INTO THE AIR
AND I HEAR
THE SOUND
DEATH
DAVE McKEAN

BWS

Desire

P. CRAIG RUSSELL-91

HAPPY
MUNDANES

FEGREDO
91

SIMON BIZ 91 MAH.

ARAGONÉS 91

SON OF ULTRON